

Red River Gourmet— Cooking with Raspberries

By Sarah Price, Assistant Editor

The inspiration for Red River Gourmet Food Company sprang out of the desire to re-create the unique flavor owner Wes Higgs experienced in the early 1990s when his mother received a jar of raspberry salsa as a gift. Higgs devoured nearly all the contents of the jar, and was scolded! He says the flavor became etched into his memory.

In January 2003, nearly thirteen years later, he remembered the salsa when buying salsa at a local store. Higgs says he used his love of the culinary arts and experimentation with ingredients from his garden until he came up with the perfect raspberry salsa of his own.

Higgs initially set out to make the raspberry salsa for his own personal consumption, but says he made

the mistake of taking some to work. With an overwhelmingly positive response from his friends and family, he was encouraged to attend a workshop at Oklahoma State University's Food and Agricultural Products Research Center in Stillwater on how to take a homemade product from the kitchen to market.

The Food And Ag Products Center provided him with specific knowledge, as well as a general overview about what to consider in producing and marketing a food product. In June 2004, Higgs finalized his formula for scaled-up production, and after meeting required food safety standards, began producing and marketing his Original Raspberry Salsa.

The initial use of raspberries came from trying his mother's raspberry salsa. However, in 2003, while conducting marketing research and developing the recipes, he discovered that raspberries are a tremendous source of antioxidants, some of which are found almost nowhere else. Approximately 50 percent of the antioxidant effect of raspberries is caused by ellagitannins which have been shown in clinical studies to reduce the risk of cancer.

Higgs says he uses raspberries because they are not only naturally good, but naturally good for you.

Higgs says the popularity of the salsas depends largely on the region in which they are selling. On average, the most popular flavor of salsa is the Red River Original Raspberry Salsa, which Higgs would consider to have the best balance of heat and sweet, followed by Mild, Hot and Chipotle Raspberry Salsas.

Red River Original Raspberry Grilling Sauce and Spicy Raspberry Grilling Sauce are even more popular, particularly during the grilling season.

Their products are made with top quality ingredients, are all-natural and contain no preservatives.

Currently, Red River Gourmet products can be purchased at Company's Comin' II located at the corner of Main and Virginia in Stillwater and via their website www.redrivergourmet.com.

Higgs says their goal is to create a multi-segment product line that focuses entirely on raspberries. They have a number of additional raspberry flavored food products in development to help build increased interest in the Red River brand, and they hope to begin making them available later this year.

All Natural No Preservatives



RED RIVER
Raspberry. Taste. Sensations.

Our original recipes and all-natural ingredients create our premium quality raspberry specialty foods.

Our Raspberry Grilling Sauces and Salsas are perfect for:

**Gift Giving, Special Occasions, and
In-home Entertaining**

Pick some up today at Company's Comin' II located in Stillwater (372-5081), or visit our website:

www.redrivergourmet.com



Wes Higgs
Founder/President